

To: Progressive Leaders and Allies  
Fr: Lake Research Partners  
Re: Message Guidance: Medicare for All  
Date: May 17, 2019

---

“Medicare for All” is a popular term, but people do not know what it is and attitudes can become easily partisanly polarized. This memo outlines our best messaging guidance:

## Key Principles of Effective Messaging on Medicare for All

**1. Medicare for All must be introduced. The selling points for Medicare for All are the benefits, not the problems with the existing system.**

Tell people, “here is what you are going to get:”

- Expanded and improved Medicare for All
- No premiums, co-pays, or deductibles
- All doctors and hospitals would be in-network for all Americans
- Reduction of the prices of prescription drugs by forcing drug corporations to negotiate, and that coverage would include dental services, vision, and mental health

**2. The best introduction also talks about the impact of the current system on the real lived experience of families and the improvements that will be made to it.**

The best messaging in favor of Medicare for All talks about families not being forced to make a decision between a life-saving surgery or a mortgage payment. Voters agree by wide margins that the cost of care in the United States is very expensive and that people should not have to go bankrupt from medical costs.

Message: *“Everyone deserves access to the care and medication they need to survive. But every day Americans are forced to decide between paying for their prescriptions or paying their mortgage. No one should have to resort to begging on GoFundMe to afford a life-saving surgery that their for-profit insurance company denied. People shouldn’t have to go bankrupt from medical costs, we need Medicare for All to provide affordable guaranteed coverage for everyone.”*

**3. Medicare for All is an expansion and improvement of Medicare, not a replacement of the current system.**

Particularly among older voters, we need to frame Medicare for All as an expansion and improvement of Medicare and *not* as a replacement of the current system. Talk about *guaranteed* health care.

**4. Talk about the services voters will get – and always emphasize reduction of prescription drug prices.**

Voters need to know how Medicare for All will be better than the coverage they have right now – and they want to know this more than how much money they will save. That said, the top component of Medicare for All is reduction of prescription drug prices. Long term care is also strong for many, including seniors.

*“Reduce the prices of prescription drugs by forcing drug corporations to negotiate”*

*“Coverage would include dental services, vision, and mental health for everyone”*

*“Provide long term care to allow seniors and people with disabilities to stay in their own homes instead of being forced into a nursing home”*

Choice of provider and expanded services is key, especially to protect against attacks on rationing, long waits, and government health care. Note that all doctors and hospitals will be in network for all Americans.

**5. When challenged on the cost of Medicare for All, respond by emphasizing the high cost of care already in the US and then pivot to the services and benefits provided by Medicare for All.**

Voters want health care coverage that provides the care people need, not the cheapest health care coverage. When challenged with some inflated price tag of the plan, highlight how Medicare for All will save money, and that the same principles have been successfully used in Maryland. However, it is key to pivot back to how Medicare for All will end up improving access to and quality of care, including reducing the price of prescription drugs.

*“Our current system costs 35 trillion dollars and independent estimates show it increasing to 55 trillion dollars by 2025. Medicare for All will reduce these costs by cutting out the insurance company middle man, cutting prescription drug prices, and allowing people to get the care they need from their doctors directly. The State of Maryland has already implemented the same budgetary principles and has shown that such a system can actually reduce waste and administrative costs, while improving the quality of care.”*

**6. Characterize the opposition as a for-profit industry.**

Be sure to note this is the for profit health care industry, for profit insurance companies, and big profitable drug corporations pushing attacks.

| Say this                                                                        | Instead of                                                              | Notes                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ✓ Expand and improve Medicare                                                   | X Replace Medicare with a similar but expanded and improved system      | Older voters in particular would rather expand the existing system than “replace” it                         |
| ✓ The for-profit health care industry and for profit health insurance companies | X Employer-based health insurance plans                                 | Voters largely like their current plans, so our messaging should focus on the for-profit industry as a whole |
| ✓ All doctors and hospitals would be in-network for all Americans               | X All doctors and hospitals would be covered and operate as they do now | Voters are familiar with insurance networks and the restrictions they impose                                 |
| ✓ Coverage would include dental services, vision, and mental health             | X Eliminate premiums, co-pays, and deductibles for everyone             | Voters are more interested in the services provided by Medicare for All than the cost savings                |
| ✓ One guaranteed plan                                                           | X One government plan                                                   | Framing Medicare for All as a guaranteed plan is stronger, particularly among independents                   |

\*\*\*\*

For more information, please contact Celinda Lake ([clake@lakeresearch.com](mailto:clake@lakeresearch.com)) or David Mermin ([dmermin@lakeresearch.com](mailto:dmermin@lakeresearch.com)) at (202) 776-9066.